Government Policy on Public Distribution System

813: SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Givernment's attention has been drawn to an editorial captioned "Coping with Plenty" published in the 'Hindustan Times' dated 2nd March, 1995 pointing out that his Ministry has no clear cut policy on Public Distribution System which has not resulted in a corresponding reduction in the volume of subsidies Government has expanded on it";

(b) whether it is a fact that Government's move to extend the PDS scheme to 1,700 most backward blocks in the country has not gone very far leaving nearly forty per cent of the population living below the poverty line to fend for themselves; and

(c) if so, what Goernment propose to do for an "efficient management of the food delivery system" so as to ensure that the benefits of food subsidies reach the needy people?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. However, the contention in the Editorial referred to, that the Government does not have a clear cut policy on Public Distribution System (PDS) is incorrect. As per the present policy of the Central Government coverage of Public Distribution System is universal in nature. The intention of the Government is to make available foodgrains to the population at affordable prices. Trere is no proposal to reduce subsidies on foodgrains by curtailing the PDS.

(b) No, Sir. The State Governments/UT Administration have reported that since he inception of the Revamped PDS (RPDS) Scheme till 28-2-95, 14109 additional Fair Price Shops have been opened in these areas against a target of 10,580. More than 35.87 lakhs ration card have been issued against 26.76 lakhs proposed by the States/U.Ts. State Governments/UTs have reported to have eliminated 115.71 lakh bogus ration cards during the same period. Additional storage capacity of 5.31 lakhs MTs have been hired/created 54319 Fair Price Shops are reported to be under the Door Step Delivery Scheme in the RPDS areas till 28-2-95. In these areas States/UTs have constituted about 1.01 lakhs Fair Price Shop level vigilance commitees. Foodgrains meant for distribution in the RPDS areas are issued at specailly subsidised Central Issue Prices which are Rs. 50/- per quintal lower than the normal Central Issue Prices for the PDS. Presenty, the offtake of foodgrains in RPDS areas is around 4 milion tonnes.

(c) The Central Government is responsible for procurement, storage and bulk allocation of six key essential commodities like rice, wheat, sugar imported edible oil, soft coke and kerosene to States/UTs. The operational responsibility of further distribution of these commodities within the States/UTs rests with them. The Central Government monitors the implementation of PDS/RPDS in the States/UTs through various periodic reports, advisory council meetings, regional meetings etc. States/UTs. have been advised to keep strict watch over supply of essential commodities and price situation and take remedial action under various Acts so that the common man does not suffer. The Central Government provides financial assistance to States/UTs for construction of godowns and perchase of vans to augment their storage and delivery system.

Assistance to Bihar from Consumer welfare Fund

814. SHRI RAJNI RANJAN SAHU: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have provided any assistance to Bihar from Consumer Welfare Fund during the years 1992, 1993, 1994 and so far in 1995; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC